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SENSITIVE

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SUBJECT: CENTRAL DUBLIN GROUP MEETING: JUNE 2003

REF: BRUSSELS 0614 (NOTAL)

11. This cable contains an action request. See para. 9.

12. Summary. In a productive June 9-10 meeting in Athens, the members of the Central Dublin Group reviewed regional reports from Central Asia (Italy), Eastern Europe (Germany), Southwest Asia (UK) and Southeast Asia and China (Australia). Greek Foreign Minister George Papandreu addressed the Group in connection with the thematic discussion of the "Balkan route." Europol, UN Office of Drugs and Crime (ODC) and the U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) made presentations. In connection with the 2004 Olympics to be held in Athens, there was a brief presentation on sports and doping by officials of the Olympic Committee. It was noted that Spain and the United States would switch regional chairs for the next two years: Spain would be responsible for the regional report on South America and the U.S. for Central America. The reports would be due at the next meeting of the Central Dublin Group in December/January 2004. On the margins of the meeting, the Italian delegation asked if the U.S. Embassy in Bishkek could take the lead on formation of a Mini Dublin Group in Kyrgyzstan. This was the first meeting of the Group attended by EU accession state members who were there as observers. USEU NAS Frank Kerber, INL/PC Program Analyst Maren Brooks, and Embassy Athens JHA officer Alfred Schandlbauer attended the meeting. End Summary.

General Discussion

13. The thematic discussion of the "Balkan route" was opened by Jorge Molling, Deputy Head of the Europol Drugs Unit. He divided the Balkan drug trafficking route into three primary sectors: the northern, central and southern routes. The northern route, in turn, could be divided into three: 1) Turkey-Bulgaria-Romania-Hungary-Poland; 2) Turkey-Bulgaria-Romania-Germany; and 3) Turkey-Bulgaria-Serbia-Croatia-Slovenia. The central route is Turkey-Bulgaria-FYROM-Bosnia-Italy. The southern route is Turkey-Greece-Albania-Italy). He noted that 75 percent of the heroin in Europe is processed in Turkey by organized criminal groups. Fifteen percent of the Balkan economy is based on the illicit drug trade. The UNODC presentation was given by Vladimir Femepepetov. He noted that 75 percent of the heroin in Europe is processed in Turkey by organized criminal groups, and that 15 percent of the Balkan economy is based on the illicit drug trade. Tony Ballas, DEA representative at Embassy Athens, said that the Balkan route for contraband, illegal narcotics and human trafficking is the prime gateway to the Western Europe market. In addition, the Balkans have become a major transfer and storage point. There has been a proliferation of clandestine labs along the route for the manufacture and/or synthesis of heroin and synthetic drugs like Ecstasy. The French delegate gave a summary of the recommendations of the Ministerial Conference on drug trafficking routes from Central Asia to Europe hosted by France on May 21-22, 2003.

14. Greek Foreign Minister George Papandreu addressed the Group, stressing that the interrelation between supply and demand for narcotics "should prompt us to examine how we can contribute to combating criminality and whether it is possible for drug users to stay away from criminal circles." He stressed the great importance attached by the Greek Presidency to problem of drug trafficking, as well as to all security issues relating to narcotics smuggling, while underlining the need for the EU to formulate a common policy on the issue. Papandreu noted the "polarization" between more lenient policies in some European countries and those in favor of the present legal structure. He said it is important to hold a continuous dialogue on drug policy with all regions of the world, including the U.S., "the leader in the area of anti-narcotics policies." On harm reduction, the Foreign Minister said: "I continue to believe that it is a justified approach. There is some ambiguity which allows certain misconceptions and criticism by international narcotics control agencies of the practices adopted in certain (European) countries, as well as hesitation on the part of other countries (read U.S.) to adopt measures which have proven effective." Finally, he called on the EU to

promote an open dialogue on how to deal with the growing problem of cannabis use.

Regional Reports

15. The members reviewed regional reports from Central Asia (Italy), Eastern Europe (Germany), Southwest Asia (UK) and Southeast Asia and China (Australia). It was noted that Spain and the United States would switch regional chairs for the next two years: Spain would be responsible for the regional report on South America and the U.S. for Central America. The reports are due at the next meeting of the Central Dublin Group in December/January 2004. On the margins of the meeting, the Italian delegation asked if the U.S. Embassy in Bishkek could take the lead on formation of a Mini Dublin Group in Kyrgyzstan.

Other Business

16. The chair (Raymond Yans, Belgian consul in Luxembourg) announced that the next meeting of the Central Dublin Group would be held in Brussels in December or January 2003, depending on the availability of meeting rooms at the EU. The thematic discussion at this meeting will be the toxicological impact of cannabis use. In this connection, the chair asked if the U.S. could provide a scientific expert on the subject.

17. The chair noted that several EU ambassadors, including Germany and The Netherlands, had asked about the harmful health and environmental impact of the U.S. eradication and fumigation program in Central and South America. He asked whether the U.S. could provide an expert to discuss this issue at the next meeting.

Accession States

18. This was the first meeting to which the EU accession states were invited. Only Hungary, Slovakia and the Czech Republic sent observers. The accession states will continue in observer status at the winter meeting, but will assume full membership at the summer 2004 session. These countries have converted from their previous status as the subjects of Mini Dublin regional reports to that of Dublin Group members solely by virtue of their accession to the EU next year. Kiyokazu Ota, Minister at the Japanese Mission to the UN in Vienna, and Elizabeth Day, Second Secretary at the Australian Mission to the UN in Vienna, expressed their concern privately to the USDEL that inclusion of all ten accession states clearly weighed Central Dublin Group membership in favor of the EU (25 to 5), with the U.S., Canada, Japan, Australia and Norway the only non-EU members. They indicated their intention to press for a discussion of "Dublin Group" membership criteria at the next meeting.

19. Action request. Please advise whether the U.S. intends to provide experts on the health impact of cannabis use as well as the U.S. eradication and fumigation program in Central and South America at the winter Dublin Group meeting. Request also department thoughts on membership criteria for Dublin Group.

FOSTER